

# Scandinavian *Kalf* and Estonian *Kalev*

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OLD ICELANDIC SAGAS tell us about several prominent men who bore the name *Kalfr*, *Kálfr*, etc.<sup>1</sup> The Old Swedish form was written as *Kalf* or *Kalv*<sup>2</sup> and was a fairly common name in Viking-age Scandinavia.

An older form of the same name is probably *kaulfr* which is found on a runic stone (the Skárby stone). On the basis of this form it is believed that the name developed from an earlier *\*Kadulfr* which goes back to Proto-Norse *\*KafwulfaR*. It is then a compound as are most of old Scandinavian anthroponyms. The second element of it is the native word for "wolf," ON *ulfr*, OSw. *ulv* (cf. OE, OS *wulf*, OHG *wolf*, Goth. *wulfs*, from PGmc. *\*wulfaz*). The first component, however, is most likely a name element borrowed from Celtic, cf. Old Irish *cath* "battle, fight." It is contained in the Old Irish name *Cathal* which occurred in Iceland also, viz. as *Kadall*. The native Germanic equivalents of OIr. *cath*, which go back to PGmc. *hafu-*, also occurred in personal names (e.g., as a monothematic Old Norse divine name *Høðr*), and the runic *Hafuwulfr*, ON *Hølftr* and *Hálfr*, OE *Headuwulf*, OHG *Haduwolf*, *Hadulf* are exact Germanic correspondences of the hybrid *Kálfr*, *Kalfr* < *\*Kadulfr*. However, counterparts of the compound containing the Old Irish stem existed also in other Germanic languages: *Ceadwulf* in Old English, and *Kathwulf* in Old High German.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the variants see E. H. Lind, *Norsk-isländska dopnamn och fingerade namn från medeltiden* (Uppsala and Leipzig, 1905–15), e. g., p. 672f.

<sup>2</sup> Elof Hellquist, *Svensk etymologisk ordbok* (Lund, 1948), s. v. *Kalf*; Assar Janzén, "De fornsvenska personnamnen," *Nordisk Kultur*, VII, pp. 261 and 263.

<sup>3</sup> For further data about occurrence, etymology, and origin of ON *Kalfr*, OSwed. *Kalf*, *Kalv* and the counterparts, see E. Hellquist, *Svensk etymologisk ordbok*, s. v. *Kalf*; F. Holthausen, *Vergleichendes und etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altwestnordischen* ... (Göttingen, 1948), s. v. *høð*, *Høðr*, and *Hølftr*; F. Holthausen, *Altenglisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1934), s. v. *headu-*; J. de Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Leiden, 1962), p. 298; E. H. Lind, *Norsk-isländska dopnamn*, l. c.; Assar Janzén, "De fornvästnordiska personnamnen," pp. 44 and 139, and note 74 (on p. 150), and "De fornsvenska personnamnen" by

The Old Icelandic form of the name is recorded in writing as *Kalfr*, *Kálfr*, *Kallfr*, *Calfr*, *Kǫlf*(*f*), *Kalvr*, etc. The *f* in voiced environment (in oblique cases, but also before the nominative *-r*) became pronounced as voiced /v/. Likewise the Old Swedish form was pronounced with /v/, and this was the final sound in the nominative (*Kalv*). In Old East Norse (Old Swedish and Old Danish), a shwa (svarabhakti) vowel developed in consonant clusters containing an *l* or *r*. This unstressed vowel varied in dialects, having sometimes the same quality as the preceding stressed vowel (e.g. *Karal* for *Karl*, *Roloff* for *Rolf*), but often it became an *e*-sound. When the vowels of unstressed syllables were weakened, unstressed /a/ generally became at first /æ/, then /e/.<sup>4</sup> Thus the pronunciation of the name written *Kalv*, *Kalf* in Old Swedish was something like \*/'kaləv/.

This name form shows a striking similarity with the personal name *Kalev* in Estonian, *Kaleva* in Finnish, which occurs in the folklore of the Finns and Estonians and in their national epics, the Finnish *Kalevala* and Estonian *Kalevipoeg*.<sup>5</sup> The name of the Estonian national hero, Kalevipoeg, is a patronymic, "Kalevson" (*poeg* means "son"; *Kalevi* is the genitive sing. form). The name occurs mostly as a patronymic (*Kalevanpoika*) also in Finnish folklore and in the epic.<sup>6</sup> The title of the epic, *Kalevala*, is a form derived with the suffix *-la* and means the abode of the Kalevas.

the same author, p. 261 and esp. p. 263, both in *Nordisk Kultur*, VII: *Personnavne* (Stockholm, 1947).

Janzén has interpreted Old West Norse *Kalfr*, Old Swedish *Kalv* as a monothematic name meaning "calf" and listed it among names derived from denominations of animals, although as a rule the words denoting strong, wild animals were used in names. Therefore he conceded (in "De fornsvenska personnamnen," p. 263) that according to the more general view it was a compound which developed a form homonymous with the animal name.

<sup>4</sup> A. Noreen, *Altschwedische Grammatik* (Halle, 1897), pp. 146–149, 125, and 85; E. V. Gordon, *An Introduction to Old Norse* (London, 1944), pp. 300f. and 256.

<sup>5</sup> Composed by F. R. Kreutzwald in the middle of the nineteenth century, *Kalevipoeg* consists partly of folk songs, partly of versification of folk tales and other material.

The Estonian folk tales about Kalevipoeg have been published in *Muistendid Kalevipojast* (*Monumenta Estoniae Antiquae* II; Tallinn, 1959), edited by E. Laugaste and E. Normann.

<sup>6</sup> Aimo Turunen, *Kalevalan sanakirja. Lexique du Kalevala* (Helsinki, 1949), s. v. *Kaleva*, esp. p. 69; Helmer Winter, "Kalevanpojat — Kalevipoeg," *Estonian Poetry and Language. Studies in Honor of Ants Oras* (Stockholm, 1965), pp. 202 ff.

In spite of various attempts at finding an etymology for the name *Kalev*, *Kaleva*, no native word is known from which it can be derived without phonological difficulties.<sup>7</sup> The same is true of foreign appellatives, e.g. Lithuanian *kálvis* "smith,"<sup>8</sup> which have been proposed as origin for the name.

A more recent supposition, made by A. Saareste<sup>9</sup> and P. Ariste,<sup>10</sup> derives the name from a rare North-Estonian dialect word, the adjective *kalivägine* (a compound of *kali* of unexplained origin, and *vägine* "having the strength [of somebody or something]") which means "lean but muscular," and is used primarily for domestic animals (esp. for cows), but also for men. They connected the word also with a substantive spelled as *Kalliweh* (gen. *kalliwehje*) and translated as "Riese," referring to Goliath, in H. Stahl's homilies in the seventeenth century.<sup>11</sup> Ariste added to the list of supposed equivalents an Estonian island-dialect word, *kali* "a wooden lever." This hypothesis involves obvious phonological and semantic difficulties and has been rightly rejected by J. Mägiste.<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, attempts have been made to find counterparts to *Kalev(a)* in foreign onomastic material: it has been connected

<sup>7</sup> Suggestions such as a derivation of the name from Est. *kalju*, Finn. *kalli* "rock" (which is an old Germanic loanword, from PGmc. \**χalliō*), made in the nineteenth century, cannot deserve serious consideration in the present-day state of research.

<sup>8</sup> This was suggested by A. Ahlquist in his *De vestfinska språkens kulturord* (p. 52) in 1871, and was supported even by such an outstanding linguistic scholar as E. N. Setälä, but has now been rejected.

Surveys of previous theories are found in the excellent work by August Anni, "F. R. Kreutzwaldi 'Kalevipoeg,' I: Kalevipoeg eesti rahvaluules" [i. e. "Kalevipoeg in Estonian folklore"], with a summary in German, "Kalevipoeg in den estnischen Volksüberlieferungen", *Eesti Vabariigi Tartu Ülikooli Toimetused. Acta et Commentationes Universitatis Tartuensis (Dorpatensis)*, B, Humaniora, XXXII (Tartu, 1934); further, e.g., in Aimo Turunen, *Kalevalan sanakirja*, s. v. *Kaleva*; and Hildegard Must, "Vom Ursprung der Personennamen im 'Kalevipoeg,'" *Journal de la Société Finno-ougrienne*, LV (Helsinki, 1951). The works of A. Anni and A. Turunen also contain extensive lists of bibliography.

<sup>9</sup> A. Saareste, "Kalev, Kaleva sõna algupärast" [i. e. "On the origin of the word Kalev, Kaleva"], *Virittäjä*, 1950, 89–101, esp. p. 91, and "Kalev," *Ural-Altäische Jahrbücher*, XXIV (1952), 36–41.

<sup>10</sup> *Looming*, 1946, nos. 7/8, 922–25.

<sup>11</sup> However, since Stahl was no native, this spelling may easily be a folk-etymological form developed by him.

<sup>12</sup> *Välis-Eesti* (Stockholm), 1948, No. 49 (215), p. 6.

with the ethnic names Oícel. *Kylfingar* (plur.) and the *kolbyagi* of old Russian records. They have been thought to be related to Est. *Kalevine*, *Kalevane*, Finn. *Kalevainen*, formations of patronymic value. The *Kylfing*-theory (proposed by A. Schiefner) was supported and developed by such prominent Finnish scholars as Julius Krohn, Kaarle Krohn, and J. J. Mikkola.<sup>13</sup> Further, *Kalev(a)* has been compared with *Cælic*, the name of a ruler of the so-called Finns, i. e. probably the Lapps, in the Old English *Widsið*.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps the most important discovery done by previous research is the recognition that the personal name *Kalev(a)* is probably represented by *Kolyvan* as the name of what is now the city of Tallinn in Estonia, and by the personal name *Kolyvanov(ič)*, both found in old Russian records (chronicles, et cetera).<sup>15</sup> These Russian forms render derivatives of the personal name *Kalev*, *Kaleva*, or at least they all have the same origin. However, the comprehension of this still leaves the origin itself unexplained.

Such names as Finnish *Kalevan tähti* for the star Sirius, *Kalevan miekka* (literally "Kalev's sword") for the constellation of Orion, or Estonian *Kalevipoja juuksed*, literally "Kalevipoeg's (Kalevson's) hair," denoting a kind of plant, are obviously secondary and derived from the personal name (for which process there are many parallels internationally, e. g., *Aaron's rod*, *Aaron's beard*, and *Jacob's ladder* denoting plants, the last also a kind of ladder, etc.), not vice versa. Likewise, expressions such as Finn. *miehen kaleva* referring to a tall and strong man (*mies*, gen. *miehen* "man"), or *puun kaleva*, used for an extraordinarily big tree,<sup>16</sup> are secondary and based on the similarity of qualities of a person or thing with the extraordinary strength and size which have become characteristic of the *Kalev(a)s*

<sup>13</sup> Important works by K. Krohn pertinent to the *Kalev(a)*-problem are: "Kaleva und seine Sippe," *Journal de la Société Finno-ougrienne*, XXX (1913–1918) and "Kalevalankysymyksiä," I and II, in the same journal, XXXV–XXXVI (1918); *Suomalaisten runojen uskonto* (Porvoo, 1914); "Kalevalastudien", I–VI, *Folklore Fellows Communications*, LIII, LXVII, LXXI, LXXII, LXXV, LXXXVI (1924–38).

<sup>14</sup> "weold . . . Cælic Finnum" in line 20.

<sup>15</sup> For example, a fourteenth-century chronicle of Novgorod tells about a contemporary Oleksandr Kolyvanov, and a Novgorod army harried at the fortress Kolyvan in the thirteenth century (A. Anni, *op. cit.*, p. 191; M. Vasmer, "Studien zur russischen Heldensage," II, *Zeitschrift für slavische Philologie*, VI (1929), 320–29.

<sup>16</sup> Y. H. Toivonen, *Suomen kielen etymologinen sanakirja*, I (Helsinki, 1955), s. v. *Kaleva*.

in folklore. Even a use of the name *Kalev* as an appellative (if understood and recorded correctly) meaning "giant"<sup>17</sup> is easily understandable for there are numerous parallels of the development of proper names into appellatives, such as a *Sam(p)son*, *Judas*, etc., and the name of Julius Caesar has universally become the term for a *caesar* or emperor.

Thus in the search for the origin and etymology of Est. *Kalev*, Finn. *Kaleva* two principles have been followed: some scholars have tried to derive the name from appellatives, native or foreign, in the belief that an appellative has developed into the proprium, while others have connected the name with foreign proper names.

However, modern folkloristic research, especially that done by Kaarle Krohn<sup>18</sup> and August Anni (the later August Annist),<sup>19</sup> has made it clear that the original hero (or heroes) bearing this name must have been an historic person (or persons). This opinion is most convincing especially because of the fact that a man called *Kalevipoeg* or *Kalevi poeg* "Kalev's son" (which name is sometimes used as a patronymic in addition to another name, e. g., Osmi or Lemming), is the hero of some Estonian narrative folksongs which tell about real, non-fabulous events of everyday life, and Kalev's sons appear in Finnish folksongs also. Because of the rigid form of the folk songs, the rhythm, alliteration, parallelism, etc. which have even preserved their archaic language, the songs are more conservative and can less easily be corrupted than prose; therefore the tradition that connects the name with real persons in everyday life must be older.<sup>20</sup>

Kaarle Krohn<sup>21</sup> pointed out typical Viking features of the original Kalev(a)s which are found in folklore. From these he concluded,<sup>22</sup> as had also done Julius Krohn, that the original Kalev(a) was a Viking and that the bearers of the name perhaps belonged to a noble family, the nobility of the Viking era. In this conviction these scholars were joined by A. Annist (Anni) who, in his investigation of the folkloristic material, arrived at the conclusion that there must

<sup>17</sup> "Riese" besides "mythische Person" in the dictionary of F. J. Wiedemann, *Estnisch-deutsches Wörterbuch*, s. v. *Kalew*.

<sup>18</sup> See note 13.

<sup>19</sup> See A. Anni, *op. cit.*, esp. p. 195.

<sup>20</sup> A. Anni, *op. cit.*, pp. 166 ff. and 195.

<sup>21</sup> esp. in his *Suomalaiisten runojen uskonto*, pp. 342 ff.

<sup>22</sup> "Kaleva und seine Sippe", *Journal de la Société Finno-ougrienne*, XXX, and in "Kalevalastudien," I, *Folklore Fellows Communications*, LIII, and elsewhere.

have once existed an historic personage Kalev and his son or sons and that they were Vikings. He, further, supposed that they may have been members of Estonian nobility or otherwise prominent Estonians in the Viking period.<sup>23</sup>

In pursuit of the prototype of the hero called Kalev and Kaleva (or "Kalevson"), the folkloristic research has thus arrived in the world of the Viking age. In the same era we find the equivalent of his name – *Kalf*, which is old Scandinavian.

Since there is no native etymology for *Kalev*, *Kaleva*, the Scandinavian name must be the original. It was borrowed into Estonian and Finnish probably in the Old Swedish form, *Kalv*, in which the unaccented vowel developed from the shwa between the consonants of the cluster.<sup>24</sup> The Finnish form ends in an additional, final vowel by analogy with the structure of native words (to which all loanwords are conformed, e. g. Finn. *tunneli* "tunnel," *miljoona* "million," *Öölanti* "Öland," etc.).

Thus this name of Norwegian and Swedish Vikings became known and was used also in the Viking countries of the eastern Baltic, Estonia and Finland. (It probably progressed still farther, into the easternmost region, Novgorod, and survived in the form of *Kolyvanov*, -ič.) This was no unique or solitary case of borrowing. Scandinavian loanwords were adopted in Finnish and Estonian in the Viking period, as they were before and after it. Also proper names were introduced. Like Kalevipoeg himself, his closest companions, *Olevipoeg* and *Alevipoeg*, bear Scandinavian names which were common in the Viking era.<sup>25</sup> These names, patronymics in agreement with the hero's own name, were borrowed from Old Swedish *Olef*, *Olev* (the equivalent of West Norse *Olaf*) and *Alf*, *Alv* (with an inserted shwa, \*/'aləv/) respectively.<sup>26</sup> Especially the name of St. Olaf († 1030) became popular in all northern European

<sup>23</sup> A. Anni, *op. cit.*, pp. 195f.

<sup>24</sup> Incidentally, an insertion of a shwa into consonant clusters is found also in Finnish dialects.

<sup>25</sup> Hildegard Must, *Journal de la Société Finno-ougrienne*, LV, 12f.

Also *Osmi*, the first name of a "Kalevson" in Estonian folklore, is probably of Scandinavian origin, cf. *Ás*-, *Ósmundr* (ON *áss*, *óss* "god").

<sup>26</sup> OSwed. *Olef*, OIcel. *Óláfr* etc. < PNorse \**Anu-laibaR*; OSwed. *Alf*, runic Swed. *Aulfr*, OIcel. *Álfr* < PNorse \**Aþ-wulfr*, cf. *Athawulfus*, the name of a Gothic king. See E. Hellquist, *Svensk etymol. ordbok*, s. v.; A. Janzén, *Nordisk Kultur*, VII, pp. 108, 259, et passim.

countries because of the spread of the enormous popularity of the saint and the legends about his miracles. He was venerated also in Estonia, and a lofty church with the highest steeple in northern Europe was built in his honor in Tallinn (the capital of Estonia) — it is called *Oleviste*.

We possess no records about the real persons, presumably Vikings, Kalev or Kalevipoeg and his companions. We do not even know whether the historic Kalevipoeg was an Estonian (or a Finn) or a foreigner. It was not at all unusual that stories and songs circulated and epics were composed about foreign heroes. For instance, the Old English *Beowulf* (which contains some international folkloristic motives similar to those of Kalevipoeg's tradition) praises Danish and Swedish heroes. Several Vikings called Kalfr appear in the Icelandic sagas, but we cannot decide whether anyone of them is the prototype of Kalevipoeg because we do not have enough historical material to prove it sufficiently. It is presumable that oral sagas about famous Viking chiefs as well as songs praising their deeds existed also in Finland and especially in Estonia through which country the Vikings traversed on their journeys to the east, the Viking-time Novgorod. There were not only a vivid commerce across the sea and other connections between Estonia and Sweden; not only were the eastern Vikings from Sweden active there, making raids to the eastern coasts of the Baltic and provoking Estonian vikings' raids of revenge into Sweden: also Norwegians sometimes came to the shores of Estonia and Finland, as we learn from the sagas.<sup>27</sup> But no Estonian or Finnish historical sagas have come down to us. Similarly no Swedish or Danish sagas have survived.<sup>28</sup> They were not written down before the historic facts became corrupted and mixed with popular, fictitious motifs (which development is noticeable already in the later Icelandic sagas). Therefore the historic deeds of the Viking Kalevipoeg have been forgotten, his real image faded and blurred by later admixture of mythical and other fictitious features.

<sup>27</sup> For example, in his childhood king Olaf Tryggvason and his mother were taken prisoners by Estonian vikings on the Baltic Sea and spent some years as slaves in Estonia (until they were bought free), and St. Olaf in his youth harried on the shores of Estonia and Finland (as is told in the sagas of *Heimskringla*).

<sup>28</sup> There are only possible fragments, e. g., in Saxo Grammaticus; see Axel Olrik, *Danmarks heltedigtning*, I and II (København, 1903—1910), or *The Heroic Legends of Denmark* (New York, 1919).

The more stories are told about a famous person, the more of fabulous motifs are added to the original; a celebrated hero attracts, like a magnet, various folkloristic motifs until his original, human features are hardly recognizable. This has happened to several heroes, especially foreigners occurring in folklore. And this has been the fate of the hero called Kalevipoeg – as we now know him from folklore. It is chiefly his name that still bears witness of his origin.

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